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AUTHOR Parody, Ria Charlotte
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to test the relative effectiveness of two different Readers Theatre techniques with regard to audience understanding of a certain character in the literature. Four experimental groups, each with about 22 students, were selected from sophomore American literature classes at Upper Arlington High School in Columbus, Ohio. The subjects viewed either a conventional production or a multi-media production of "The Member of the Wedding." The multi-media production utilized slides meant to be interpretations of one of the character's thoughts. After the subjects saw the performance, they were tested to determine their understanding of the character. A set of bi-polar adjectival scales was designed to measure semantic agreement specifically for this production. The statistical data seemed to indicate that both conventional Readers Theatre and multi-media Readers Theatre were equally effective in communicating literature to an audience. (WR)

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AN EXPERIMENT IN MULTI-MEDIA READERS THEATRE

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

by

Ria Charlotte Parody, B.S.
The Ohio State University, 1972

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CS 500 623

Katherine Schoen
Advisor
Department of Speech Communication

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A number of books, articles, and theses have been written about Readers Theatre, and it seems only proper to begin a paper about an experimental Readers Theatre production with a definition of the concept. There are at least as many definitions as there are people practicing the art. The following is a sampling of ideas from traditionally recognized authorities in the field.

Leslie Irene Coger, of Southwest Missouri State College, calls it "Interpreters Theatre" and defines it as "a medium in which two or more oral interpreters through their oral reading cause an audience to experience literature."[1] Keith Brooks, of The Ohio State University, suggests that "'Readers Theatre is a group activity in which the best of literature is communicated from manuscript to audience through the oral interpretation approach of vocal and physical suggestion.'"[2] Perhaps the best definition of Readers Theatre to come from the writings of the authorities is not really a definition at all, but a statement on the intent of the medium. Joanna Hawkins Maclay, University of Illinois, states that "Readers Theatre has been committed to the principle of

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[1] Leslie Irene Coger, "Interpreters Theatre: Theatre of the Mind," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLIX, No. 2 (1963), p. 157.

[2] Keith Brooks, as quoted by Coger, Leslie Irene and White, Melvin R. in Readers Theatre Handbook (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967), p. 9.

of featuring . . . literary texts. . . . the purpose of the production is to clarify, illuminate, extend, or provide insights into the particular literary texts being presented."[3] It might also be noted that "there is no one way of presenting a script. Once the director has identified his objectives . . . he is free to experiment with many different approaches and the technique to help achieve the theme."[4] Such a statement is a rationale for this type of study.

The major purpose of this study was to determine the relative effectiveness of two different Readers Theatre production techniques with regard to audience understanding of the literature presented. In this paper, reference will be made to "conventional" or "pure" Readers Theatre and "multi-media" Readers Theatre. A clarification of these terms is necessary if a full understanding of the study is to be achieved.

For the purposes of this study, "conventional" or "pure" Readers Theatre is defined as the technique in which the readers use only their voices and bodies to suggest the characters. Bodily action is limited to what the readers can do in fixed stage positions. In this case, the readers were seated on chairs, so action was restricted to hand and arm movements, etc. "Multi-media" Readers Theatre, in this study, is defined as conventional Readers Theatre with one element added—projected slides.

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[3]Joanna Hawkins Maclay, Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 3.

[4]Coger and White, Readers Theatre Handbook, p. 40.

In Readers Theatre the readers give "to the audience. . .the inner essence of the literature, but the audience must mentally furnish the scenery, the costumes, the action, the make-up, and the physical appearance of the characters."[5] Communicating such things to an audience, however, need not be left solely to vocal and physical suggestion of the readers. Keith Brooks has said that "Readers Theatre. . .if the literature requires, may incorporate selected theatre properties to assist the listener in fulfilling the potential of the literary experience as suggested by the readers."[6] If projected slides are used to supplement the characterization of one of the readers in a Readers Theatre production, is there a better audience understanding of that character than there would be in a conventional production? If the audience can literally visualize the thoughts of one character, as determined by the director's interpretation of that character, through the medium of projected slides, would the audience better understand the character? If these slides are added, would the production seem more entertaining and evoke more audience response, or would the new element add confusion? These are the questions this experiment in multi-media Readers Theatre attempted to answer.

What happens when a method of communicating literature, such as Readers Theatre, is combined with another medium of communication, such as photography? What kind of audience response does the combination generate?

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[5] Ibid., p. 9.

[6] Keith Brooks, Robert C. Henderhan, and Alan Billings, "A Philosophy on Readers Theatre," The Speech Teacher, XII, No. 3 (1963), p. 230.

Informal experimentation with various techniques has been going on in Readers Theatre for some time. In Charles Laughton's production of John Brown's Body, by Stephen Vincent Benet, "a musical accompaniment was used not so much as background as for carrying the dramatic action forward in the way choruses do in Greek drama. . . . Lighting was used to enhance the mood."[7] Gene Franklin's production of Brecht on Brecht utilized "a large picture of Brecht hanging from the ceiling; a few placards were lowered on ropes at various times during the performance."[8] So, even from the beginning of Readers Theatre, which appeared in its present form about twenty years ago, its proponents were not averse to trying different techniques for the purpose of heightening audience response and making the entertainment more entertaining.

The investigator of this study had a dual interest in both Readers Theatre and photography. So, the logical path to follow in experimenting with multi-media Readers Theatre seemed to be to combine pure Readers Theatre with the medium of photography. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effect that two different production techniques, conventional and multi-media Readers Theatre, using the same script and readers, had on audience understanding of a particular character in the literature interpreted. This hypothesis was tested and analyzed statistically. There was, however, another purpose.

It was the opinion of the investigator that Readers Theatre can be a valuable aid in teaching literature to students. For this reason,

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[7]Coger, "Interpreters Theatre," p. 159.

[8]Ibid., p. 160.

the experiment was performed in high school classrooms where students were studying literature. Part of the study included an evaluation of the open-end responses of the students exposed to the two different techniques.

Three hypotheses were formulated for this study. The first was that multi-media Readers Theatre is a more effective way of communicating literature to an audience than is pure Readers Theatre. This was the only hypothesis to receive a statistical analysis. The second hypothesis was that multi-media Readers Theatre is a more enjoyable way of presenting literature to an audience than is pure Readers Theatre. The third hypothesis was that Readers Theatre can be an effective way of communicating the meaning of literature to a classroom audience so as to be used as a teaching aid. The last hypothesis is most important in determining the communicative function of Readers Theatre.

There were several limitations to the study. Selected readers had only one formal college course in Oral Interpretation. Rehearsals had to be adjusted to each reader's schedule, and extensive rehearsal periods were impossible. Since the study was conducted in a local high school, Upper Arlington High School in Columbus, Ohio, experimental groups had to be chosen from classes available there; only some control over variables could be exercised. Sophomore English classes were used, so the age variable was controlled as was the literary experience, to some extent. However, two teachers each volunteered two sections of their classes, so English instruction might not have been consistent. Productions had to be adapted to the classrooms, and four different classrooms were used. The classrooms were not equipped for slide viewing.

Groups tested were small, and the production plus time for audience response to questionnaires used as a measuring device had to be adapted to one classroom period of fifty minutes.

The remainder of the thesis is organized in the following manner. Chapter II deals with literature related to this study; Chapter III, with the Research Design. Chapter IV discusses an analysis of the statistical data; and Chapter V offers an analysis of other data obtained in this study and conclusions.

"Interpreters Theatre has not been fully exploited. It is free for experimentation, and open to the use of imaginative techniques for bringing literature to audiences."[9] There is a need for further experimentation beyond pure Readers Theatre, if for no other reason, than to determine if there is anything else as good as the pure form, if not better, for communicating the meaning of literature to an audience.

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[9] Ibid., p. 164.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Although relatively little experimental research has been done in Readers Theatre since its inception about twenty years ago, recent trends seem to indicate that as interest in Readers Theatre grows, more studies will be produced. There are some studies related to multi-media Readers Theatre, but no studies dealing with it specifically. The studies deal with multi-media theatre, multi-media instruction, and the effects of a variety of media, including Oral Interpretation, on audience understanding of literature.

In an unpublished work, "An Annotated Bibliography of Readers Theatre Works," Joshua Crane cited Judy Lee Svore's 1965 Masters thesis at the University of Montana, "An Investigation of Audience Response to Prose Literature when Perceived through Silent Reading, Oral Interpretation, and Readers Theatre," as follows:

> Svore used short stories that were read as individual Oral Interpretation presentations to one group, as Readers Theatre presentations to another group, and read silently by a third group. All subjects responded on Smith's Semantic Differential for Theatre. . . . She found that Readers Theatre elicited a stronger audience response on the 'serious factor' scales than the silent reading did. She found that other factors and scales were unaffected by the method of presentation.[10]

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[10]Joshua Crane, "An Annotated Bibliography of Readers Theatre Works," (unpublished bibliography, The Ohio State University, 1971), p. 8.

Crane also cited Daniel M. Witt's 1964 Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Denver, "A Comparative Analysis of Audience Response to Realistic and Anti-Realistic Drama when Perceived through Acting, Readers Theatre and Silent Reading." Witt also used Smith's Semantic Differential for theatre, this time with "six groups . . . , three to be exposed to each play, one by reading it silent [sic], one by seeing it performed as a Readers Theatre presentation and one by viewing it as actor's theatre."[11] Although "Witt claims four significant differences regarding specific factors and/or scales and methods of presentation or [sic] realistic or anti-realistic material. . . ."[12] Crane's opinion is that the results are limited due to Witt's measuring device and material.[13]

These two studies parallel the present one, but they in no way employed any technique other than conventional Readers Theatre. They were more concerned with testing the relative effectiveness of Readers Theatre against other methods of experiencing literature—silent reading and actor's theatre. This study was concerned with testing the relative effectiveness of two different Readers Theatre techniques.

This is not to say that the technique of combining photography with theatre has never been tried. Joanna Maclay devoted a good part of her discussion of "alienation" to such a technique. "The term 'alienation', as used by Brecht in the Epic Theatre . . . implies a particular kind of detachment that allows certain elements of a dramatic

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

presentation to stand out and consequently allows the audience to take a critical position."[14] To further clarify the concept, Maclay stated that "acknowledging actors as actors frees the audience to concentrate on the experience of the text and (strangely enough) it allows for a fuller illusion of the reality of the literary experience than is often possible in conventional, representational theatre."[15] The Readers Theatre interpreter is more concerned with presenting his interpretation of a character as part of the literature rather than convincing the audience that he is the character in a real situation, as might an actor.

Although the purpose of the photographs used in this study was not to foster the alienation effect, but to do the contrary, it might be interesting to consider how photography could be used to foster this alienation effect. In a scene from Brecht's The Private Life of the Master Race, slides were projected on a screen on the back wall of a stage or on a screen at the back of the stage. If a photograph of Hitler were projected on the screen, and cast members faced the audience giving the Nazi salute and shouting, "Sieg Heil," the audience might have identified with the "Nazi supporters" because they, too, were facing Hitler. However, because the cast was, in effect, saluting the audience, the audience might have seen itself as Hitler, this identity strengthened by the photograph of Hitler the audience saw. If a photograph of Jews in concentration camps were projected for the audience to see, but behind the backs of the actors, a different effect might have

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[14] Maclay, Readers Theatre: Grammar, p. 37.

[15] Ibid., p. 38.

been achieved. If the audience responded to the sadness and the horror of war as symbolized by the photograph of the Jews, the cast, sensing the audience was not "with" them, could have turned around, seen what the audience had seen, and begun to think about their "own" viewpoint.[16] One of the purposes of this study was to determine whether or not the projected slides used would give more insight into the character than a pure Readers Theatre technique would, so the relationship between this study and the Brecht analysis was evident.

Several informal studies of multi-media productions have been undertaken. Robert Versteeg, Director of Drama at Louisburg College in North Carolina, discussed "A Multi-Media Production of Romeo and Juliet," which he and his students produced. Versteeg and the students used three slide projectors for this theatrical production, located at various places in the theatre. Three screens were placed opposite the projectors, some distance away and not on stage; one screen was "floated" above a section of the audience. The slides were used for the purpose of intercutting scenes, superimposing images over actors for visual effect, and presenting scenes on the screen simultaneously with scenes performed by the actors on stage.[17] "We also anticipated that audience members would be obliged to cope with these experiments and thus might become participants in the meaning-making process."[18]

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[16] Ibid., pp. 39-41, passim.

[17] Robert Versteeg, "A Multi-Media Production of Romeo and Juliet," Educational Theatre Journal, XXI (October, 1969), p. 259.

[18] Ibid.

Versteeg cited several examples of how slides were used in the production. During Juliet's "tomb" speech, all her imagined horrors were projected on the screens so that the audience could visualize her mental images. In another situation, while several onstage scenes were occuring inside the tomb, the important events happening outside the tomb were being projected on the screens to give the audience an overview none of the characters had.[19] The audience was in the same position as an omniscient narrator in a novel. To enhance an emotional mood and give insight into facial expressions occuring on stage, meditative faces of statues were projected following the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. All the slides were used to supplement the play and characterizations, but not to eliminate the original meaning or impact of the play. Versteeg summed it up by saying, "Just as we teach our actors to gesture the thing symbolized and not the symbol, so, perhaps, our experimentation with the projections might fruitfully explore such a maxim as 'project the implicit, not the explicit.'"[20] Project what is felt, not what is seen. That Versteeg offers no empirical evidence for this study seems to be its one weakness.

In a different vein is Lawrence W. Rosenfield's "A Project for Multi-Media Instruction." Mr. Rosenfield discussed how multi-media techniques, in this case tape recordings and projected slides, can be used to help students understand various compositional devices, "the

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[19] Ibid., p. 260.

[20] Ibid.

interaction of logos, ethos, and pathos."[21] He used John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech as an example. Students listened to a tape recording of the speech. When

> Kennedy says 'and if a beach head of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion . . .' the following configuration of images is projected:
>
> 1) Logos—the picture of Marines landing at Iwo Jima.
> 2) Ethos—picture of J. F. K. and his P.T. boat crew.
> 3) Pathos Appeal—American Legion member listening intently to the speech.
>
> The composite of the three images even as Kennedy is heard speaking the words reveals to students the full meaning of the particular phrase evoked for the American audience in 1960. . . .[22]

Rosenfield offers no empirical evidence of this, however. The slides can be used to illustrate and explain concepts that students might have difficulty understanding if these concepts were not visually illustrated. Perhaps the same holds true for characters in literature. Would a student be better able to understand a character if he had some visual criteria to judge with?

Because this study was concerned with testing the relative effectiveness of two Readers Theatre techniques, a measuring device of some type had to be employed. There had been, to this point, Raymond Smith's "Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts," in which Smith classified judgements of theatrical presentations into four categories or factors: Manner, Seriousness, Ethical Value, and Esthetic Value. Smith stated that these factors could be used to measure changing concepts resulting

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[21] Lawrence W. Rosenfield, "A Project for Multi-Media Instruction," The Speech Teacher, XVII, (September, 1968), pp. 260-261.

[22] Ibid., p. 261.

from formal education in theatre, but he admitted that the Semantic Differential had to be adapted to suit the concepts inherent in the subject matter under study.[23] Following Smith's study, Frandsen, Rockey, and Kleinau constructed what they called a "Semantic Differential for Readers Theatre." They added two factors to Smith's--Content and Intent Evaluation.[24] However, they seemed to be more concerned with measuring evaluation of a specific production, and not necessarily audience understanding of the literature. The most significant contribution to the Semantic Differential controversy was the Hansen-Bormann study. Hansen and Bormann found that it would be possible to construct a Semantic Differential without regard to categories or factors, but, simply, one which involved a number of scales consistently relevant to theatrical concepts.[25]

In 1971 Joshua Crane completed his doctoral dissertation, "An Investigation of Cast and Audience Semantic Agreement in Readers Theatre Productions," at The Ohio State University. The study was concerned with a means of effectively measuring how well literature interpreted in a Readers Theatre production is being communicated, as it relates to the Semantic Differential. Crane found that there was a need for a

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[23]Raymond G. Smith, "A Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts," Speech Monographs, XXVIII, No. 1 (1961), pp. 1-8, passim.

[24]Kenneth D. Frandsen, James R. Rockey, and Marion Kleinau, "Semantic Differential for Readers Theatre," Speech Monographs, XXXII, No. 2 (1965), pp. 112-118, passim.

[25]Brian K. Hansen and Ernest G. Bormann, "A New Look at a Semantic Differential for the Theatre," Speech Monographs, XXXVI, No. 2 (1969), pp. 163-170, passim.

measuring device designed specifically for the purpose of finding Semantic Agreement "among and between Readers Theatre casts and audiences."[26] "The author made a comparison of those scales frequently used by others in assessing concepts of literature in Readers Theatre productions and drama. . . . From this examination, twenty scales, or bi-polar adjectival pairs, were selected as being most common to all of these differentials."[27] These Crane called General Scales, and they were used for all productions studied. In addition, Crane designed Particular Scales for each specific production. These Particular Scales formed the basis for the scales used in this study. Construction of these scales is discussed more fully in Chapter III.

After an exhaustive study of a wide variety of casts, audiences, and literature, Crane concluded that Semantic Agreement can be an effective index of agreement among and between casts and audiences; that when literature was effectively communicated through Readers Theatre, this agreement tended to increase; and that Semantic Agreement tended to be affected by variables such as education, training and experience in Readers Theatre, and familiarity with the literature involved.[28] It might also be noted here that those wishing to obtain an excellent overview of the growth and development of Readers Theatre from its inception

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[26]Joshua Crane, "An Investigation of Cast and Audience Semantic Agreement in Readers Theatre Productions," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1971), p. 2.

[27]Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[28]Ibid., pp. 87-88.

to the most recent trends would be well advised to read Crane's extensive first chapter.

At the end of his second chapter, Crane noted that his "review of the relevant literature should demonstrate that in the experimentation in Readers Theatre and in Semantic Consensus in drama and Readers Theatre, only a foundation for further investigation has been laid."[29] It does not seem unreasonable to extend this statement to include all aspects of Readers Theatre experimentation. In light of the literature discussed in this chapter, it seems evident that there is a need for a study in multi-media Readers Theatre.

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[29] Ibid., p. 67.

CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Since the primary purpose of this study was to test the relative effectiveness of two different Readers Theatre techniques with regard to audience understanding of a certain character in the literature, steps to control variables other than the independent one were taken. The independent variable was what made the difference between the two production techniques—the projected slides. The four experimental groups selected were four sophomore American Literature classes from Upper Arlington High School in Columbus, Ohio. Each class averaged approximately twenty-two students. Students from this school were selected due to background in the literary experience and availability and interest in the study. The researcher felt that freshman classes did not have enough literary sophistication for effective analysis of the literature, and that, perhaps, those on the junior and senior levels had too much and would be able to effectively interpret the literature no matter what techniques were used in presenting it.

The literature chosen was The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers. The researcher, who was also the director of the production, prepared a composite script using both the McCullers novel and play. Passages from the novel were used for purposes of narration, while most

of the dialogue came from the play. The script was adapted to fit within the fifty-minute class periods at Upper Arlington and to allow for audience response to the questionnaire distributed in conjunction with the study. The script required between twenty and twenty-five minutes to perform. A copy of the complete script used in this study can be found in Appendix C.

The literature centered upon a thirteen-year-old girl. The researcher felt that the audience could easily identify with her, due to the proximity in age. Numerous characters appear in the original play and novel, but because of time limitations involved, the researcher adapted the script to focus on the three major characters—Berenice Sadie Brown, John Henry West, and the protagonist, Frankie Addams. A narrator was added to effect transitions between scenes. Plot line revolved around Frankie's growth from childhood to adolescence and her reactions to her brother's wedding. The script was tested in a preliminary study in which the researcher had presented a shorter version of the script to a college class in Readers Theatre at The Ohio State University. The class professor evaluated the script, and a study in cast-audience agreement conducted in the class revealed a high correlation between cast and audience understanding of the literature, a sign that the literature had been effectively communicated, according to the principles of the study.[30] The script used in this study was evaluated by the researcher's advisor, an associate professor of Speech at The Ohio

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[30] Ibid., p. 177.

State University, who was experienced in Oral Interpretation and Readers Theatre.

Cast members were students from an Oral Interpretation class at The Ohio State University. Students in this class were allowed to pursue individual projects suggested to them by their instructor-advisor. Three girls chose to participate. Two of the readers each assumed one part. The parts of the narrator and John Henry were read by the same girl. The director, a graduate student with experience in Readers Theatre, assigned the parts on the following basis: a black student was assigned the part of Berenice, the black cook; a tall girl with light brown hair, was assigned the part of Frankie; a blonde girl who wore glasses, was assigned the parts of the narrator and John Henry. The three girls assumed these roles because each one most closely fit the description of the three major characters Carson McCullers had used. These readers participated in all four productions which were presented in classrooms at the high school. According to the director, who saw all four performances, and the English teachers, who each saw two performances, the readings were consistent. No one production was better or worse than another, so the variable of inconsistent performances was somewhat eliminated.

The control productions were kept on the level of "pure" Readers Theatre, as explained in Chapter I, in order to minimize distractions. The readers sat on chairs during the presentation. Chairs were placed in the front of the classroom for conventional productions and at the back of the classrooms used for the multi-media productions, for reasons

to be explained later in this chapter. Chairs were "center stage" and the readers were seated in the following order: Berenice, right-center stage; Frankie, center stage; John Henry-Narrator, left-center stage. The readers sat "in character." Berenice sat up straight and properly as an adult might sit. Gangling, adolescent Frankie sprawled all over the chair, occasionally hooking her legs around the legs of the chair. John Henry, described by McCullers as quite alert, perched on the edge of the chair, in an eager, childlike fashion. When the reader's characterization changed from John Henry to the Narrator, the reader sat up and back in the chair, and assumed the role of the adult storyteller.

The technique of offstage focus was used, where the characters visualized each other offstage, at imagined locations slightly above the heads of the audience. The readers never established eye contact with each other on stage, however. The narrator looked directly at the audience in her role as the storyteller. A minimum number of gestures were used to suggest action. Readers memorized their lines in order to make them feel completely at ease in their roles and not dependent upon the scripts. They did retain copies of the script in black folders on stage, as a symbol of Readers Theatre. Scripts were occasionally used as props, at the discretion of each reader. For instance, if a reader got angry "in character" she might have slammed the script down on her lap to emphasize her anger.

Two productions were presented without slides and two with slides. Two Upper Arlington High School teachers each volunterred two sections of their classes for a total of four different groups. The division of

performances was set so that one of each teachers' sections saw a conventional production and one saw a multi-media production. Performances were set on two separate days--one teacher's classes on a Monday, the other teacher's classes on a Wednesday. The times for performances were the same on both days, one at 8:00 a.m. and one at 10:00 a.m. The readers had a one-hour break from nine to ten. Multi-media productions were shown at the first 10:00 performance and the second 8:00 performance. Selection of these times was based on the fact that the two rooms used at these times had windows, so that even though the lights were turned off and the shades drawn so that the audience could see the slides clearly, the audience could also see the readers through the remaining windowlight. The other two rooms used had no windows and, thus, no source of light other than the lights on the ceiling. If these lights were turned off, the audience could see the slides, but not the readers!

A Kodak Carousel slide projector and a screen were provided by the visual aids department of the school. The projector was used for showing the slides, but the screen was not large enough to accomodate the size of the slides, which were projected from some distance away from the readers in order to keep the projector "offstage." Also, the screen could not be elevated above the readers' heads to keep the projector light from shining in their eyes. Thus, the director decided to project the slides on blank walls at the backs of the classrooms used.

Several other problems were encountered. First, the slides were to have been interpretations, as seen by the director, of Frankie's

thoughts. Ideally, the slides would have been projected directly above Frankie's head, implying that she was thinking what the audience was seeing, much the same was as a cartoon balloon is used indicating what a character is saying or thinking. However, just above Frankie's head, in both instances, was a wall clock which could not be removed. Shifting the chairs to the right or left would have denied students sitting in side rows of desks a clear line of sight to the readers. Consequently, the director decided to project the slides slightly off-center, thereby eliminating the distraction of the clock. Unfortunately, in the opinion of the director and the teachers, some of the impact of the slides was lost.

In addition, the colors of the walls (one was beige and the other, blue) adversely affected the clarity of the slides, which would have been better projected on a white background. The light coming through the windows with the shades drawn, though necessary, washed out the images to some extent.

The slides themselves were meant to be interpretations of Frankie's thoughts, but not necessarily literal interpretations. Slides were selected and copied from the researcher's collection of books about photographers and photography. Since the researcher is an instructor of photography at The Ohio State University, the resources were extensive. All photographs copied were from black and white plates in books. This was done to minimize the distraction of switching back and forth from color photographs to black and white photographs, and to minimize the distraction of color itself. Slides were made using the researcher's

Nikon FTn 35 mm. camera and a 55 mm. Nikkor macro-lens, designed for close photographic work and copy work. Kodak High Speed Ektachrome Film, Type B, for exposures using artificial lighting (photographs were made indoors, using two floodlights as main sources of illumination) was used; the film, when processed, produces color transparencies, or slides. There was no readily available film for black-and-white transparencies, and since all photographs copied were black and white, the color film could be used.

Images were selected on the basis of how well the image fit the interpretation of Frankie's thought pattern in the researcher's judgement. For example, when Frankie envisioned her brother and his bride as a happy couple, a photograph of a happy young couple standing arm-in-arm in front of a loaded station wagon, a symbol of young American familyhood, appeared. Whenever Frankie thought of her happy brother and sister-in-law, this same slide flashed onto the screen. When Frankie imagined herself growing into a freak, the audience saw a photograph of a sad, rather absurd circus clown. These photographs were not strict, literal interpretations of Frankie's thoughts, but, rather, images that fit her thoughts.

After the students saw the performances, they were tested to determine their understanding of the character of Frankie Addams. For this test, a measuring device had to be designed. Since the researcher had previously participated in an experiment involving a production of The Member of the Wedding, and a set of bi-polar adjectival scales had been designed to measure Semantic Agreement specifically for that

production, and since these scales had been tested and approved in prior research, it was decided to use these scales for this experiment. Joshua Crane's Particular Scales for The Member of the Wedding consisted of eight sets of bi-polar adjectives based on the Psychological View of Frankie. The eight sets of adjectives were as follows: sensitive—insensitive; extrovert—introvert; sterile—creative; romantic—realistic; static—changing; unimaginative—imaginative; unsophisticated—sophisticated; and temperamental—good-humored. Students were asked to respond to these adjectives on a seven point scale. Positions on the scale were Extremely, Quite, Slightly, Neither or Undecided, then Slightly, Quite, Extremely. The adjectives were placed at either end of the seven point scale. A copy of the scales as they appeared on the questionnaires distributed to the students can be found in Appendix A.

Crane's formula for determining Semantic Agreement was

"$D_a = \frac{N_g\sqrt{s\Sigma_1 d^2}}{N}$ where

s = the number of scales used;

d = the difference in scale scores between each subject and those of every other subject in the group; and

N = the number of such comparisons made."[31]

Semantic Agreement to be computed in this study was not as broad as in Crane's study. The director's understanding of Frankie, as indicated by the director's response to the scales, was set up as the norm for comparison. The readers also responded to these scales. Because of the

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[31] Ibid., p. 118.

high degree of correlation between the readers' and director's responses, the director's interpretation of the literature was communicated. The scores of each member of the audience were compared with the scores of the director. The new formula for computing Semantic Agreement was $D = \sqrt{s\Sigma d^2}$. In this case, because only one comparison was made, the comparison between audience member and director, N = 1. Therefore, the necessity to divide by "N" was virtually eliminated. The procedure for analyzing and interpreting data obtained from these scales is discussed in the next chapter.

In addition to responding to the scales, all students were asked to respond to a number of questions to determine their familiarity with the literature and the concept of Readers Theatre. Students who saw the multi-media productions were asked additional questions to determine their familiarity with the concept of multi-media. All students were invited to comment on aspects of the production not covered in the questionnaire. Analysis of this non-statistical data appears in the fifth chapter.

The researcher distributed the questionnaires immediately following each performance. Students were asked to read the instructions silently, then respond to the questions. Questions for clarifying instructions were permitted, if necessary. No students required assistance regarding directions for completing the questionnaire, and only one student asked for definitions of a set of bi-polar adjectives--"introvert" and "extrovert." The researcher defined the terms for the whole class by explaining that an extrovert was an outgoing person, and

letting the students determine the definition of "introvert," based on their understanding that the pairs of adjectives were opposite.

Only those students who saw the multi-media productions responded to a two-page questionnaire that included the additional questions on multi-media. The bi-polar scales, demographic questions, and questions concerning the literature and Readers Theatre were all contained on one page, the only page given to students who saw the conventional productions. Although written directions were on the form regarding open-ended comments, the invitation to comment was repeated orally by the researcher before students began their responses to the questionnaire and again while they were completing the questionnaire. Students were given ten minutes to complete the form. The researcher then collected the questionnaires and led the classes in an open-ended oral discussion. The results of these discussions, along with analyses and discussion of other data, are reported in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE SEMANTIC AGREEMENT

This chapter discusses the analysis of the Semantic Differential results. An analysis of both the written and oral open-ended audience response and the researcher's personal observations appear in Chapter V.

Analysis of the Semantic Differential results proceeded in the following manner. After rehearsals, but before any formal performance, the director (who was also the investigator of this study) responded to the set of scales used in this research to measure the audience response to the literature. The readers also responded to the scales at this time. Because of the high correlation between the director's and the readers' responses, the director's responses were considered the norm, or the basis for understanding the literature and for computing Semantic Agreement. Semantic Agreement was computed between each audience member and the director.

Numerical values were assigned to each of the seven positions to be marked on each scale. Values numbered one (1) to seven (7), inclusive. In order to facilitate computing "D," or the distance between the audience members and director (as explained in Chapter III), all "positive" adjectives were placed on the same side of the scales. "Positive" adjectives were those deemed by the researcher to be most descriptive of the character of Frankie Addams. The positive adjectives were assigned

the higher numerical values. A set of converted scales indicating the director's numerical responses can be found in Appendix B.

Two sets of questionnaires were obtained from the two control groups which had seen the Readers Theatre productions without slides; these group responses were labelled Treatment A. Two sets of questionnaires were also obtained from the two different audiences which had seen the productions with slides; these group responses were labelled Treatment B. There were forty-one (41) respondents in each of the two treatments for a total of eighty-two (82) responses. As in the procedure involving the director's responses, each respondent's set of scales was converted so that all "positive" responses were on the same side, and numerical values were assigned to each position the respondent marked on a scale. The higher the number, the more positive the response, or the closer the response came to that of the director in understanding the character of Frankie Addams as intended.

Distance was then computed with the following formula: $D \frac{\sqrt{s \sum_1 d^2}}{N}$, where D equalled distance, "s" equalled the number of scales used, "d" equalled the difference between each respondent and the researcher, and "N" equalled the number of comparisons made. Since only one comparison was made, the comparison between audience members and director, "N" equalled one (1), and so, for all practical purposes, there was no division by "N."

With the help of a student assistant in the computer center of the Department of Speech Communications at The Ohio State University, the researcher designed a conversational computer program to formulate "D"

between each respondent and the director. First, the director's numerical responses were programmed by the researcher; then, each respondent's numerical responses were entered. For each set of numerical responses given, "D" was computed.

After "D" had been computed for each of the 82 respondents, a T-Test was used to determine if there was any significant difference between D-scores in Treatment A and D-scores in Treatment B. The results of the T-Test were used to reveal which production technique was more effective in helping the audience gain an understanding of the character of Frankie Addams. It should be noted that the programmed T-Test was appropriate for the small size of the samples, and because normal distribution curves were assumed due to the homogeneity of the audience (see Chapter III).

The means of the distance scores in Treatment A and Treatment B were calculated as part of the T-Test, and the variance for each treatment was recorded. Variance for Treatment A was .65; variance for Treatment B, .30. "T" was calculated as .312. Degree of freedom (d.f.) was equal to 80. According to a Table of Critical Values of t,[32] a "d.f." of infinity would have .20 level of significance (the researcher assumed a two-tailed test due to the doubtful existence of many extremely low or extremely high scores) if "t" equalled 1.282. This was the lowest t-score on the table. Therefore, it seemed to be a reasonable assumption that the t-score in this study was too low to indicate any significant

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[32]Henry L. Adler and Edward B. Roessler, Introduction to Probability and Statistics (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1968), p. 298.

difference. An F-score of 1.042 was also computed. For all practical purposes, it seemed reasonable to say that the samples in Treatment A and Treatment B were homogeneous, since homogeneity is indicated by an F-score of one (1). Based on these statistics, it seemed reasonable to conclude that both treatments exhibited the same degree of understanding the literature, and that the hypothesis that the multi-media technique would give a better understanding of the literature than the pure technique should be rejected.

All students were asked to respond to questions regarding their familiarity with the literature and with the concept of Readers Theatre. Students in the experimental group--those seeing the multi-media productions--were asked to respond to questions regarding their familiarity with the concept of multi-media. All students were also asked to make open-ended comments on the back of the form. A discussion of the responses to these questions, the researcher's personal observations, and the conclusions reached in this study are in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF NON-STATISTICAL DATA AND CONCLUSIONS

Following each presentation, students were given approximately ten minutes to respond to the questionnaires. They were asked to make any additional comments on the back of the form to items not covered in the questionnaire. These instructions were given orally after the researcher had distributed the forms, but before the students began to respond. They were repeated approximately five minutes later. Of the forty-one (41) respondents seeing the productions without slides (Treatment A), six added comments on the back of the form. Of the forty-one (41) respondents seeing the productions with slides (Treatment B), eighteen (18) chose to respond further on the productions. The six respondents from Treatment A all came from the same class--the class that saw the final performance during the 10:00 a.m. period. The eighteen respondents from Treatment B were equally divided between the group seeing the second performance at one 10:00 a.m. period and the group seeing the third performance at one 8:00 a.m. period. The only group not responding in this manner was the group that saw the first performance during the first 8:00 a.m. period on Monday morning. The possibility that the day and time of morning had something to do with this lack of response could not be completely ruled out. However, it should

be noted that the second 8:00 a.m. class, which saw the slide production, did respond as much as the first 10:00 a.m. class, which also saw a slide production.

Comments from Treatment A were generally favorable. Two students thought the production itself was "very good." One student responded similarly to the facial expressions of the readers. One student thought the production was "great"; one said it was better than he thought it would be; and one said it was "good," but he liked something different, giving no indication as to what that "something" was. This particular class was the one which responded most favorably and at the greatest length during the oral discussion period at the end of the performances and time allotted for response to the questionnaires. Students were eager to know if anything besides plays could be made into a Readers Theatre production. One boy suggested a program of selected Poe stories and poetry. Students revealed that part of their study of American Literature was to include a reading and analysis of the play, Our Town, by Thornton Wilder, and that they were not looking forward to it. They seemed to feel that if they could see a Readers Theatre production of the play, and if they, themselves, could produce it, the study might be worthwhile. The researcher later found out that the school had decided to produce a Readers Theatre version of Our Town.

For the most part, students who reacted to the slide productions reacted to the production as a whole, often not specifically mentioning the slides. Comments ran the gamut from "interesting" to "very effective." One student compared Frankie to his own sister. Another

student told the researcher not to pay any attention to his responses. Another student admitted he did not understand the story too well. The latter two comments, however, were not necessarily unfavorable, and not necessarily directed toward the effectiveness of the productions. The other sixteen comments were deemed favorable by the researcher.

Five students commented specifically about the slides. Four of the comments were obviously favorable: "gave you a better impression of what the people were thinking"; "the slides were very helpful in understanding the story"; "I tried to associate the readings with the slides—it was easy and very good"; "though the slides were slightly distracting they added to the meaning a lot." The fifth student responded to a problem discussed in Chapter III. He said, "It's too bad we couldn't see the slides better it [sic] would have made it even better !!" This comment, however, could not necessarily be judged unfavorable.

The fact that approximately 44% of the students in Treatment B provided supplementary responses and that only 15% in Treatment A provided such responses might indicate a more favorable response to a somewhat less conventional form of Readers Theatre. When a new element was added, the level of interest seemed to increase. Thirty-one (31) of forty-one (41) students responded that the slides were "not at all" distracting, and that the remaining ten (10) students found the slides only "slightly" distracting. This would seem to indicate that they were not merely entertained by the additional element of the photographs, but were responding more frequently to the production as a whole.

In response to other questions asked, forty-seven (47) students said that they were not familiar with the literature, and twenty-five (25) were only slightly familiar with the literature. Two responded that they were extremely familiar with the literature, and one student did not respond. Only fifteen (15) of the eighty-two (82) students were familiar with the concept of Readers Theatre; sixty-seven (67) were not. Thirty-three (33) of the respondents rated the production "extremely" effective and forty-five (45) rated it as "quite" effective as an interpretation of the literature. One student found the production only "slightly" effective. Three (3) students in Treatment B were undecided.

Students who saw the multi-media productions were asked to respond to additional questions concerning multi-media. Twenty-four (24) students said that they had never seen any multi-media productions before, and the seventeen (17) who had seen other multi-media shows rated this production, compared with the others they had seen, as "extremely" effective (7) and "quite" effective (8). Two respondents were undecided.

In light of these favorable responses by students in Treatment B, and from observations made by the researcher, the second hypothesis can be confirmed. Readers Theatre, multi-media style, is a more enjoyable way of presenting Readers Theatre to an audience than is pure Readers Theatre. The third hypothesis, that Readers Theatre can be an effective way of communicating literature to a class, so that it might be used as an aid for teaching literature, seemed best supported by the oral response obtained from the 10:00 a.m. control group. However, all the favorable evidence from both treatments seemed to support this hypothesis,

and it can be accepted. Audiences seeing the multi-media productions tended to include open-ended responses more frequently than those seeing the "pure" productions, and that these responses tended to be favorable. This seemed to indicate a trend that might be interpreted as a more favorable response to the multi-media productions than to the pure productions. It was also indicated that though most students in both treatments were not familiar with the concept of Readers Theatre, they found it an effective way of presenting literature.

The hypotheses put forth in the first chapter were the following: (1) Multi-media Readers Theatre is a more effective way of communicating literature to an audience than is pure Readers Theatre; (2) Multi-media Readers Theatre is a more enjoyable way of presenting literature to an audience than is pure Readers Theatre; and (3) Readers Theatre can be an effective way of communicating literature to a classroom audience so as to be used as a teaching aid. On the basis of statistical analysis of Semantic Agreement, explained in Chapter IV, the first hypothesis was rejected. On the basis of analysis of non-statistical data and the personal observations of the researcher, included in this chapter, both the second and third hypotheses were confirmed.

The statistical data obtained from this study seemed to indicate that both conventional Readers Theatre and multi-media Readers Theatre were equally as effective in communicating literature to an audience. A weakness of the study should be included here. The slides used in the multi-media productions were not pretested with others to determine whether or not they communicated what the director intended. Therefore,

they represented only the director's interpretation of Frankie Addams' thoughts. If this study were replicated, a group of communications experts should be asked to evaluate the slides for compatibility with the intent of the literature as perceived by the director.

Within the limitations of this study, the first hypothesis has been rejected on the basis of statistical analysis. The second and third hypotheses have been confirmed on the basis of non-statistical analysis and personal observations of the researcher. The researcher reached several conclusions in light of the evidence presented in this study.

The groups used for this study were small and limited in scope. It seems evident that this study must be extended to include other kinds of audiences, both classroom and non-classroom, at all intelligence levels. It also seems necessary to extend the study to include school subjects other than the study of English literature in order to determine whether or not Readers Theatre can be an effective means of communicating other classroom concepts, such as history and sociology.

In this study both multi-media Readers Theatre and "pure" Readers Theatre were equally as effective in communicating the meaning of literature to audiences. This seems to point out that there are two effective ways of communicating the meaning of literature. However, the scope of this study is limited to testing only one new concept in Readers Theatre production techniques. It seems evident that further research in the field of Readers Theatre is necessary in order to examine the communicative and entertainment value of Readers Theatre itself. There also seems to be a need for further research in the field of multi-media

Readers Theatre to determine if there is a significant trend toward this as an effective production method.

It is possible that those seeing multi-media Readers Theatre might respond more favorably to it as a tool of communication because they enjoy it more as a method of communication. If this is so, then the importance of further research in the field of Readers Theatre and, specifically, in the field of new Readers Theatre production techniques, is evident.

APPENDIX A

THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE THE INTERPRETATION OF A CHARACTER IN A READERS THEATRE PRODUCTION. YOUR SERIOUS COOPERATION IN COMPLETING ALL OF THE ITEMS ON THIS FORM WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. IT SHOULD TAKE NO MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES. PLEASE RESPOND INDEPENDENTLY, WITHOUT CONSULTING OTHERS. THANK YOU.

1. After considering carefully, rate your understanding of the character of FRANKIE ADDAMS, as interpreted in this presentation, on the adjective scales below. Only one position should be marked for each scale or pair of adjectives.

EXAMPLE: If one of the scales was ROMANTIC-REALISTIC, and you felt the character, as interpreted in this presentation, was quite realistic, you would mark the scale as follows:

ADJECTIVE	Extremely	Quite	Slightly	Neither or Undecided	Slightly	Quite	Extremely	ADJECTIVE
ROMANTIC						X		REALISTIC

THE CHARACTER OF FRANKIE ADDAMS:

ADJECTIVE	Extremely	Quite	Slightly	Neither or Undecided	Slightly	Quite	Extremely	ADJECTIVE
SENSITIVE								INSENSITIVE
EXTROVERT								INTROVERT
STERILE								CREATIVE
ROMANTIC								REALISTIC
STATIC								CHANGING
UNIMAGINATIVE								IMAGINATIVE
UNSOPHISTICATED								SOPHISTICATED
TEMPERAMENTAL								GOOD-HUMORED

II. Mark the appropriate answers:

1. Present level in high school: 9th____ 10th____ 11th____ 12th____

2. Have you ever studied any of the following:
Oral Interpretation_____ Readers Theatre_____ Drama_____

3. Have you ever seen any Readers Theatre productions other than this one?
Yes_____ No_____. If "Yes," how many? _____

4. Rate your familiarity with the literature presented (before today):
Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____ Not at all____

5. How would you rate the general effectiveness of this production as an interpretation of the literature presented:
EFFECTIVE: Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____ Undecided____
INEFFECTIVE: Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____

PLEASE COMMENT ON ANY ASPECT OF THE PRODUCTION YOU WISH ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM. THANK YOU.

III. Mark the appropriate answers:

1. Have you ever seen any multi-media productions:
   Yes____ No____

   Did they involve slides? Yes____ No____

   In general, what were your reactions to the productions?
   EFFECTIVE: Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____
   INEFFECTIVE: Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____

   Undecided____

2. REGARDING THIS PRODUCTION:

   Were there TOO FEW____ SLIDES?
   TOO MANY____?

   Were the slides distracting?
   Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____ Not at all____

3. How would you rate this production compared to other multi-media productions you have seen?
   EFFECTIVE: Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____
   INEFFECTIVE: Extremely____ Quite____ Slightly____

   Undecided____

APPENDIX B

Converted Scales and Numerical Values
of Director's Responses

1. Sensitive—Insensitive 6
2. Extrovert—Introvert 5
3. Creative—Sterile 6
4. Romantic—Realistic 7
5. Changing—Static 7
6. Imaginative—Unimaginative 7
7. Unsophisticated—Sophisticated 6
8. Temperamental—Good-humored 6

Adjectives on the left are all "positive," or closest to the director's interpretation of the character of Frankie Addams. The highest numerical value assigned was seven (7), denoting the highest degree of correlation between director and audience responses. The student respondents' scales were similarly converted to facilitate computation of Semantic Agreement (Chapters III and IV).

APPENDIX C

THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

A Novel and Play by
Carson McCullers

Adapted for Readers Theatre by
Ria C. Parody

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